

Tait was very interested in this wide open mill plan. The fresh air was exhilarating, the sawdust easily cleared, and the workers were protected from the sun and the rain. The roof seemed to slope at just the right angles to catch the rain. Wooden barrels were set in well chosen spots to receive every drop of rainfall.

A hand carved wooden figure of a little man, stood alone on the roof of the mill. You could see him standing at attention if the air was calm, and only started to wave his arms if a breeze came his way. As the wind intensified, so did his waving. When a windstorm reached him, he then became a frantic maniac whom all watched and heeded, until he slowed down again. He was a favourite for many years, and lasted during the lifetime of the mill.

Tait walked again to the rear of the mill, to have another look at the pond below. There he saw the logs were kept in place by a sturdy log boom, fastened together by chains so none of them could escape.

This all took him back many years to his boyhood in Almonte, when each spring the Mississippi River was jammed with logs, tumbling their way to the great Ottawa River. Their leaping, crashing, and jostling had held him spellbound.

It was only when Tait was a bit older, that he decided to use his good sense of balance, to tackle the daring feat of a log runner. He also knew that minus spikes on his shoes or the benefit of a pike pole, would require more skill and a lot more courage. Confidence in his own ability was at a high level at this moment.

He found it fun to leap quickly from one log to the other, providing there was no hesitation in his act. If so, he found it caused the logs to sink at weird angles, and forced him to lie prone across it on his midriff, to avoid being plunged dangerously into the depths of the pond. He had heard that if this happened, it could close all avenues of escape, and often took the life of the most experienced loggers. Finally this realization sank in deeply, and his exciting adventure was abandoned. The present, brought no urge to revive this dangerous challenge, and for the first time, Tait felt older,...and much wiser.

His next stop was at the blacksmith's shop, where he met a tall, handsome and brawny Scotsman, who gave him a dazzling smile, to show a gleam of shining white teeth, in contrast to his blackened face. He envied the rippling muscles he used while working at the forge.

Here at last was the figure of an ideal athlete that he would never forget.

It was a surprise to find that this perfect muscular specimen was also a fine artistic craftsman, and noted for his work in hammered brass and copper. Yet he could shoe the horses, and invent needy pieces for use in the mill. Tait could readily see, that the blackened hands could create much beauty. He would like to see more of his work in the future.

The Company Store was conveniently located diagonally across from the boarding house. A wagon road separated the two buildings, and an open area provided space, for many varied activities and competitions. They included some track events of running, jumping, and pole vaulting into the handy deep sawdust pit. Often, an unexpected number was a fist fight, which seemed to end disputes at the first sign of a bloody nose, and when followed by a handshake it cleared misunderstandings and deepened friendships.

An audience usually gathered on the front porches of both buildings, to boo or applaud as the event warranted. They sat on leaning chairs against the wall, or at the floor edge, with their feet dangling below, completely captivated by the performances they witnessed before them.

Inside the store during the day, the company manager's office door was always open. He could be seen sitting at his huge roll top desk. It seemed to be always piled high with papers in organized confusion. Being one of the oldest lumber companies on the north shore, its historical records were stacked on heavily laden shelves, while special and recent reports were kept deep in the many drawers of the desk, or perhaps locked carefully in the extremely heavy unmovable old safe.

The office also had a First Aid Box for light emergencies, plus a pair of forceps, used on request to remove an aching or infected tooth, with no fee ever suggested for this service. As the pain subsided, the gratitude expressed by the patient was sufficient.

When you got to know the manager well enough, and had reached a certain age, he just might lift his desk cover, to show you his Can Can Girl adjusting her frilly lace garter, while she glanced over her shoulder, to see who it was invading her privacy.

Across the hallway, stood a tall counter where the book-keeper sat on his high stool. He looked after all office ledgers, accounts and books under his jurisdiction. He paid the company employees, acted as banker, and "ran" the store.

There the stock was certainly varied. Extra large tin pails held thimble shaped chocolate creams, of strawberry, walnut, or vanilla flavour. Chocolate marshmallow brooms, hard round hot peppermints and oversized gumdrops, all vied for popularity in the penny class. Logger's shoes, rubber boots, clothing, hardware to pain killer and Florida water showed the vast selection. The latter two items were sold most carefully, as some villagers who longed for a drink, would attempt to secure the pain killer or Florida water for it's alcoholic content alone. Liquor was banned in the sawmill village, but at times the "Firewater" leaked in, or a "Snake-bite" was discovered.

The store clerk was usually a fourth year medical student, who looked after the health and welfare of the mill workers and their families. The tug was ever alert to bring a Doctor in to the village for emergencies, or take a patient or accident victim out to the nearest hospital.

One year, the medical student in checking the families, found an Indian child with a bad case of eczema mixed with his mosquito bites. With care, his chilling and fever subsided, and he felt much better. He was visited daily by the student, who took his patients very seriously.

However, some days later, the student too was chilling, even while wearing his heaviest cardigan, on one of the hottest summer days. In checking his temperature, it was found to be sky high, so was immediately put to bed. The tug was at once rushed to Killarney, trusting a Doctor could be located there.

In the meantime, other men were found to be suffering from the same symptoms, and were made ready to be examined when the Doctor arrived.

Not a moment was lost, and the Doctor examined the entire village.

He then issued his terse statement.

The whole area would be quarantined.

He had found, to his horror, that there were seventeen cases of one of the most dreaded diseases of all.....small-pox!

The Indian child, and the medical student had contracted the illness, but were well on the road to recovery, and everyone else was immediately vaccinated, in the hope of preventing any further cases. The men already stricken were isolated in a suitable cabin made into a hospital ward, with the medical student in charge, closely following the Doctor's strict orders. When all had recovered, the cabin was burned to the ground. No further cases appeared. The village was very, very fortunate after all.

Some years later the medical student became a prominent Doctor in Toronto, and well known for his excellent diagnosis in medical cases, yet, always carried a number of small-pox scars on his face, which all his life reminded him of the first, and only diagnostic error he had ever made in his medical career.

If when Tait had first landed at the dock, and walked in the opposite direction, he would have discovered the high trestled tramways, where lumber was piled high on both sides of the tracks, in order to easily load the vessels that were tied alongside.

A small flat-car with wheels suitable to run on the rails of the tramway, was about the size of a railroad jigger, but large enough to hold the lumber coming out from the mill. It's locomotion was different, as often it was pulled by a most intelligent older horse, who had been trained to watch his distance from the edge of the tramway, and to follow a middle course. He proved to be much smarter than some of the men, who were known to fall below, and be quite seriously injured. If it so happened that the horse was unavailable, the cars could be pushed with human brute strength. Fortunately, they were usually empty when this was required.

Tait found it a most creative art, to have a neatly arranged lumber pile, and rows and rows of them could form a fine pattern and most artistic shadow design in the sunlight.

He soon became a master of the "Scaler's" rule, which measured a "Board Foot", which was the length in feet, the width in feet by the thickness in inches. The rule itself, looked like a yardstick, with a small metal flat piece across it's base, which could control and measure lumber in the blink of an eye. For efficiency and safety, a patch of strong leather fitted into the palm of the hand, while a protective leather apron covered the thigh, as the lumber planks were guided swiftly in place.

Tait liked the feel of the lumber which passed so smoothly through his hands. His arms and legs would develop the strength and the muscles, that would be more than useful, when he returned to McGill University.

As he walked along the tramway returning to the boarding house, he could have a close look at the smaller sailing schooners tied up in the slip, say hello to some of the sailors, and often take time to go aboard for a yarn or a bit of music. He found their mouth organs were amazing.

The boats were well sheltered in this natural canal, which was connected with the mill pond, yet protected from any logs endangering the vessels, by a strongly chained boom used to hold the logs imprisoned behind the mill.

Tait always found his appetite was ravenous by the time he arrived at his destination. He wasn't just gaining weight, it was strong hard muscle, and mighty good health.

His hopes had come true!

In fact he felt an overwhelming gratitude to his Uncle John, who had made this very different summer experience possible.

He already felt a new man, at the ripe old age of twenty-one years!

The sequel to his summer at the Inlet, was heard a great number of years later.....

* His Uncle John died in 1904

* The Mill was burned to the ground in 1918, when no machinery was available following World War One.

*The Mill property, and their virgin forests were sold, and the timber recklessly cut to destroy the lumber limits.

* In the village, the worker's houses were in such disrepair, they slowly tumbled down to disappear, as if broken hearted in their loneliness.

* The boarding house gave up the struggle with time, when a fire ended it's long and useful career. It seemed glad to have the ashes swept away by the strong north winds

* The tramways disintegrated, as they became threatening, and much too dangerous to have around.

* The schooners vanished as well, with some crossing the lakes in full sail like a ghost ship, to welcome a final resting place beneath the waves they had battled during the past century.

* The White Oak of Oakville, launched in 1867, had a long and distinguished career. Once the pride of the lakes, she ended her days as a towing barge at the Mill. Although her masts were missing, she never lost her dignity. When unable to do any further work, she was put ashore on an island in the channel, not far from the Inlet. She settled down slowly, until only her nose was above water.

The winter ice finally forced her to surrender, and only the lily pads that covered her watery grave, would know how courageously she had struggled to the very last.

- * The muskies, once a great fighting fish, have almost been eliminated, or have learned to out-wit the fishermen.
- * The greatest sadness of all, is that the once well known and proud little village of Collins Inlet, so beloved by so many throughout the past century, has now had her name erased from the map of Ontario, and eventually may only be located by archeologists looking for a lost village.

It is to be wondered if this will remain an environmental disaster of the past. Or will future planning add life and progress to the once-upon-a-time thriving and happy little community.

ONLY TIME WILL TELL

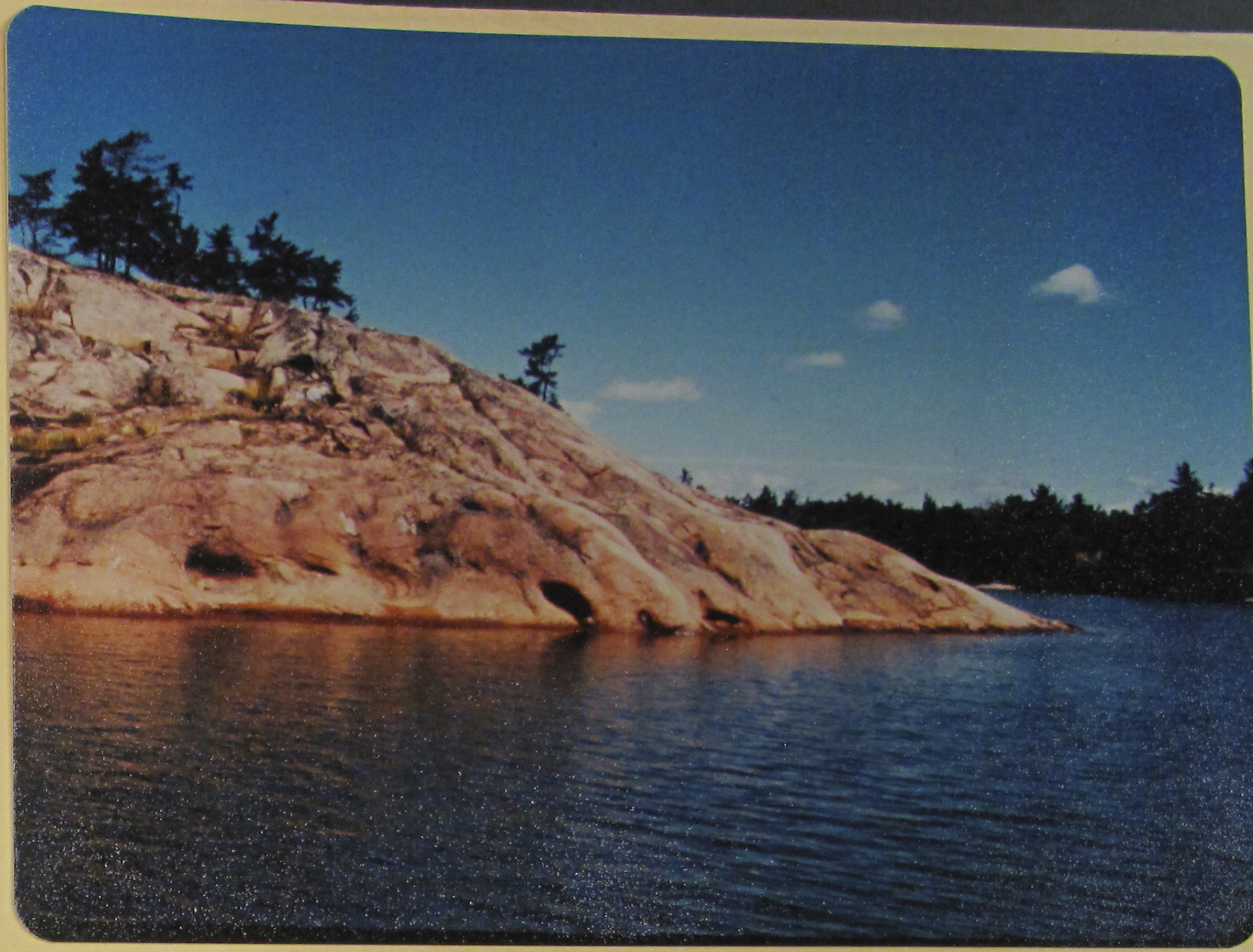
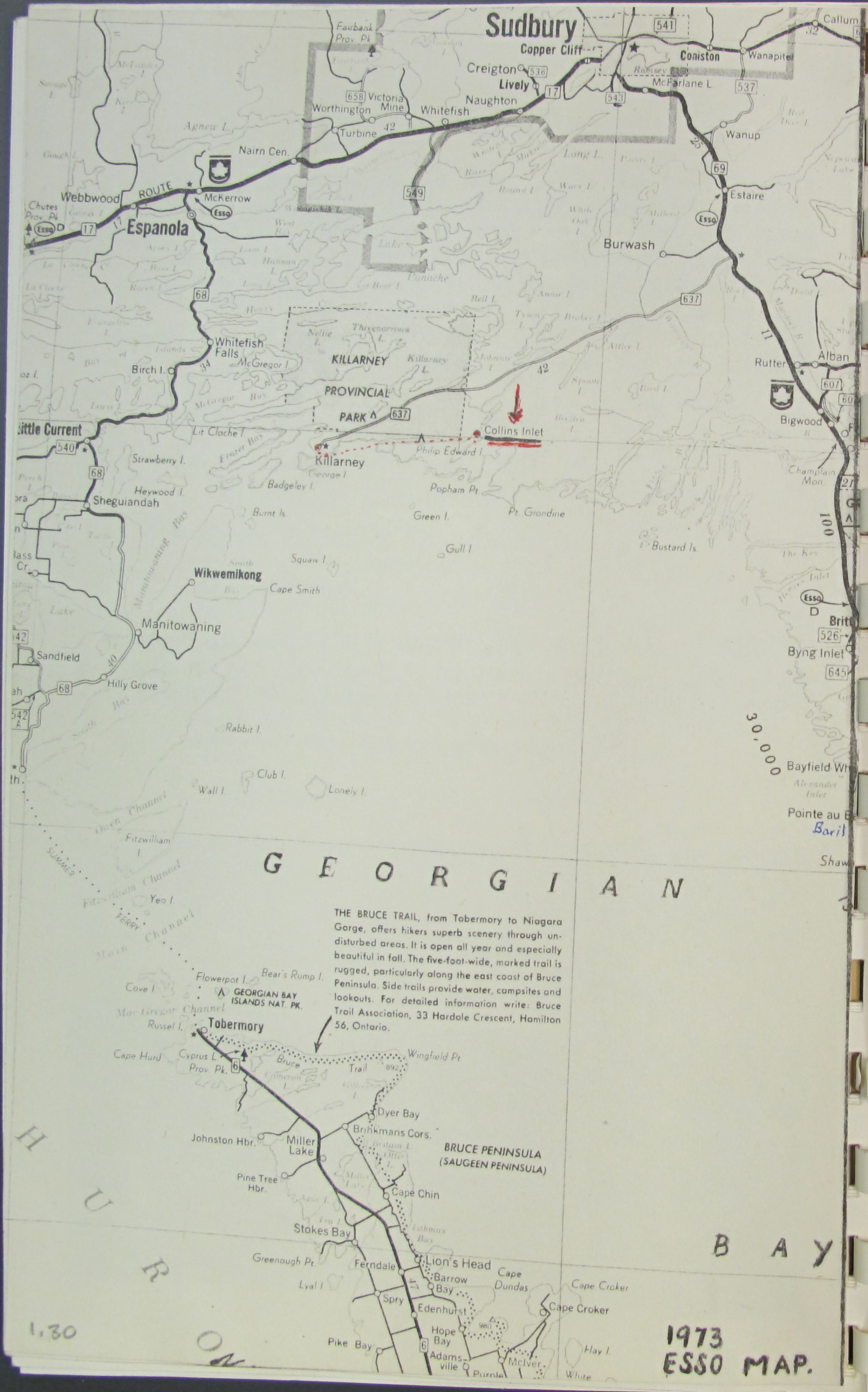
Dr R.Tait McKenzie

The summer of 1888, had no doubt accomplished Tait's ambition to have a strong body and good health, in order to continue his education at McGill, and follow his strenuous career. He was able to pursue many fields of endeavor, and excelled in all of them. Before his death in 1938, he had already become famous, and received International Honours as -

- * Medical Doctor and Surgeon
- * Physical and Health Educator
- * World Renown Sculptor
- * Author of Medical Books

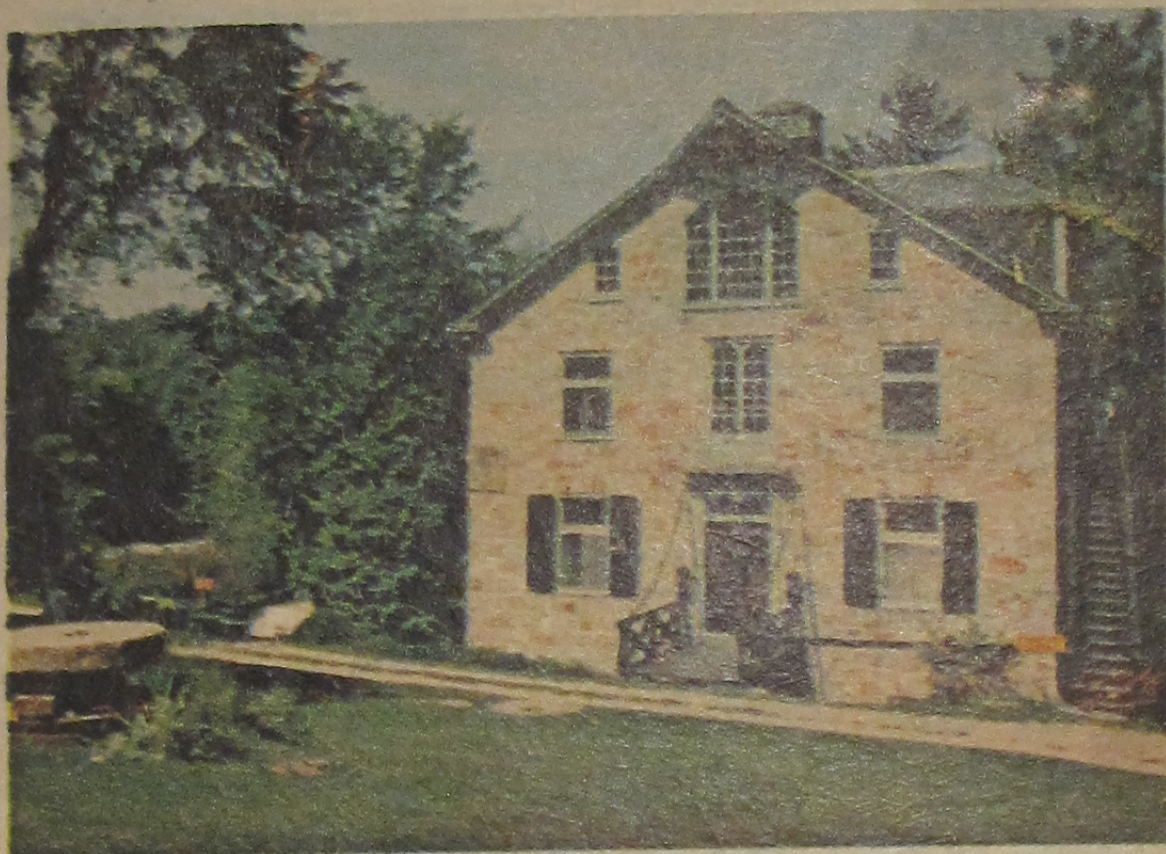
The Mill of Kintail, McKenzie Memorial Museum Almonte, Ontario, exhibits much of his sculpture The Mississippi Valley Conservation Authority.





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The Mill of Kintail. A picturesque 1830 stone mill, converted in the 1930s to a studio and summer home by Robert Tait McKenzie, world-famous surgeon, physical educator and sculptor. The Mill is now a beautiful museum displaying McKenzie's sculpture and pioneer artifacts. (North off Highway 29: mid-May – mid-October, daily.)



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